

SECRETARY'S GENEVA TRIP

July 19-24, 1962
MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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Date: July 22, 1962
Time: 12:30 p.m.
Place: Secretary's Office,
U. S. Mission Annex

Participants

United States

The Secretary of State
Mr. Hillebrand

France

Foreign Minister
Couve de Murville

Subject: BERLIN

Copies to: G S/B US MISSION BERLIN
S/S WE INR/D
S/P Ambassador LONDON
EUR Ambassador PARIS/USRO
GER Ambassador MOSCOW
SOV Ambassador BOMN

Couve began the discussion of this subject by saying he thought it very possible that the Soviets would proceed with their signing of a peace treaty with the GDR, perhaps within the next six months. The Secretary agreed that this was a rather likely development. Couve observed that what might happen would be something analogous to what happened last August - unilateral action on the part of the Soviets. The Secretary said he thought he must now ask Gromyko specifically for assurances that, if a peace treaty were signed, it would not interfere with our access to East Berlin. At this point Couve referred, somewhat confusedly, to the Jessup-Malik agreement (He presumably meant the Belz-Zarin agreement of 1955) as providing a satisfactory analogy.

The Secretary said he wondered how this estimate of Soviet intentions related to the East German request for large credits from the Federal Republic. Couve commented that this was certainly a problem. How was it possible for the GDR to ask for such an enormous amount? The British, he continued, were anxious that something be done here.

The Secretary said that, apart from the probing discussions in which we were engaged and on which the French Government had different views as to tactics, we assumed that Couve anticipated that there

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could be a larger problem in Berlin affecting French interests and that there would be no difficulty with respect to French participation in Allied consultations under these circumstances. Couve said there would be no problem. He was of the opinion that the differences between France and the U. S. had never applied to substance. However, the West must be careful not to give the impression in public that the peace treaty is already a fait accompli which we accept.

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The Secretary observed that, if the Berlin situation became more intense, the movement of French troops from Algeria to Europe might be used to signal to the Soviets the seriousness of developments. This would be less drastic than a sudden move of two or three more U. S. divisions to Europe. Couve commented that, as far as the French troops were concerned, this would be matter of presentation, since they were coming back to Europe anyway. He understood that the U. S. could not keep sending 2 or 3 new divisions to Germany with every development in the Berlin crisis. The Secretary added "Or calling up the U. S. reserves". Couve said he thought that what the U. S. had done last year in this field had not been a mistake.

The Secretary said he found it hard to believe that the Soviets will in fact let the situation come to the point of confrontation. This would be highly dangerous in that it might create a situation which could become almost unmanageable. Couve commented that the Soviets, in a sense, were in the same position as we were. No one wants a confrontation because it would be so dangerous. What the Soviets are looking for are steps which do not create this situation, for example, something like the wall. As to the wall, Couve noted that some people say the Western powers could have reacted more vigorously. He wondered whether the Secretary agreed. The Secretary said he wondered at the logic of such criticism. We could have knocked over the wall with bulldozers, and the East Germans could have rebuilt it some feet farther back. Would we have taken over all of East Berlin in order to prevent this? Couve said he agreed. In any event, the wall is now there.

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